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## ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT FOR THE MALTESE ISLANDS (JANUARY—JUNE, 1916).

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ALTHOUGH no new species has been added to the list of the birds of Malta during the first six months of 1916, nevertheless, besides several rarities, we had one occurrence which will serve to confirm what has till now figured on our list with some doubt. This is that of the Black-bellied Sand-Grouse, about which I published a short note in the 'Zoologist' for May at page 231.

Besides that of the Quails, which on April 28th arrived in considerable numbers, when at Nadur (Gozo) alone more than 2000 were taken, another passage of birds worth recording is that which occurred on March 25th, when Hoopoes, Wrynecks, Rock-Thrushes, and Wheatears came over in abundance, on which grave havoc was made by sportsmen, as will be seen from the note of the day following, in the body of this report.

Large flocks of Purple Herons passed over the island on April 6th, and a most abundant arrival of Scops Owls was noticed on the following day.

Rather noteworthy is the almost total absence of all sorts of Ducks, which are usually frequent, especially during the first months of the year.

Amongst the rarities, besides the above-mentioned Sand-Zool. 4th ser., vol. XX., December, 1916.

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Grouse, I noted a few Dartford Warblers, and obtained two Egyptian Nightjars and a Redwing. I saw two Rooks, heard of the occurrence of three others, and heard of the capture of half-a-dozen Storks—three of which were taken at the southern end of the island, the other three at the opposite end; of these I obtained one (about two of these Storks I published also a short note in the 'Zoologist' for June at page 232).

The Cream-coloured Coursers, which are here rare and irregular visitors, appeared in fairly good numbers during this period; they made their first appearance towards the end of February, and for the whole of April continued to be met with.

The varieties in plumage I noticed comprised a perfect albino Spanish Sparrow, taken in the vicinity of Krendi, a melanic form of the Corn-Bunting shot at Binghisa, and a pied Turtle-Dove taken in the nets at the neighbourhood of Melliha.

During the breeding-season the Corn-Bunting seems to have nested more freely than usual, while the nesting of both the Sardinian and Speetacled Warblers appeared to be on the decrease. Most noticable, however, and in some localities especially, was the scarcity of Sparrows' nests; and yet these birds were once considered to be a nuisance. A few Linnets nested, especially in Gozo. The majority of the nests, however, were taken before the birds were fledged. A pair of Kestrels nested in the vicinity of Krendi, and I was told that a Serin's nest was found at Boschetto. The Herring-Gull, I was told, nested also in fairly good numbers, and some of their eggs were brought into the market too. Happily the Blue Rock-Thrush was not much molested during the breeding-season; in fact I do not know of a single nest that was brought over to the dealers in town.

#### JANUARY.

1st.—A moderate wind blew from the W.S.W.; some Plovers and a few Dotterels, also one or two Woodcocks. Many Adriatic Gulls were seen passing in a northerly direction.

2nd.—The wind continued to be moderate, but turned somewhat towards the south; there seemed to be a good passage of Golden Plovers.

4th.—I passed a whole day in the country about Imtahleb.





The only birds I observed there were a few Larks, some Pipits, and one Dartford Warbler, at the bottom of the valley; a fresh wind blew from the S.W.

5th.—A very light N.W. wind; a Shoveller was shot at the Ghadira (Melliha) by Col. Francia, who sent it over to me.

7th.—A strong N.N.W. wind; many Thrushes. A Redwing was taken in the neighbourhood of Zurrico.

12th.—A fresh north-westerly wind, with a little rain. I observed three Firecrests in Col. Francia's garden at Casa Lia. I was told that several of these birds were noticed at the Botanical and Maglio Gardens in Floriana.

14th.—A rather strong north-westerly wind, with a shower every now and then. I observed a Dartford Warbler in a garden at Sliema, and a Blackcap in the Argotti Botanical Gardens, where Firecrests seemed pretty common.

15th.—A moderate north wind; there was what appeared to be a good passage of Song-Thrushes, and one or two Golden Plovers.

16th.—The wind to-day was a light N.W., and we had a pretty good passage of Song-Thrushes; also a few Blackbirds, Lapwings, and Golden Plovers. I saw the first Wryneck of the season brought into the market. Lieut. Jessop of the West Yorkshire Regiment reported to me that he had seen three Black Redstarts, some Pipits, Stonechats, and Wagtails, in the vicinity of Città Vecchia.

20th.—A strong E.S.E. wind. I passed the whole day out in the country around Birzebbugia. The birds I observed were some flocks of Larks, terribly frightened at the continuous volleys shot at them by half-a-dozen sportsmen. I noticed also a Kestrel and some Spectacled and Sardinian Warblers; also one Subalpine Warbler. The Corn-Bunting's note could be heard continuously in all directions.

21st.—A Great Crested Grebe was brought into the market at Valletta.

22nd.—I saw the first Scops Owl of the season brought into the market. The wind blew rather strong from the W.N.W., and we had a pretty good passage of Song-Thrushes and a few Scops Owls.

25th.—The same wind as that of the 22nd, and another

rather plentiful passage of Song-Thrushes ; also a few Golden Plovers and Pipits, some White Wagtails, and many Larks.

26th.—Wind blowing milder from the same direction. Song-Thrushes again plentiful. Sparrows showed increase (but always scarce), and nests with eggs could already be found.

28th.—A Short-eared Owl was exposed for sale on one of the stalls at the market.

#### FEBRUARY.

4th.—Several dozens of Sparrows and other small birds were taken by means of the bat-net and brought into the market, where I observed also some Thrushes and one Scops Owl.

5th.—Weather-cocks pointing to the W.N.W. Some Snipes were observed, and a few taken ; there were many Starlings, plucked of their feathers, in the market.

7th.—A very light wind from the W.S.W. Snipes again ; also some Jack Snipes, a few Golden Plovers and Lapwings ; also one or two Blackbirds.

11th.—The wind blowing moderately from the S.S.W. This brought many Song-Thrushes, which arrived during the night ; in the valleys a few Scops Owls were observed. Golden Plovers and Ruffs were seen at the Marsa and Salina ; at this last locality a few were also taken.

12th.—The wind increased in force, and we had a passage of Song-Thrushes, with some Blackbirds.

15th.—The only birds brought into the market were some Quails, Thrushes, and Larks, three Linnets, one Robin, two Jackdaws, and two Golden Plovers.

20th.—A moderate wind from the west ; a few Lapwings and Plovers were observed. Four or five Teal came into Marsa-cirocco Bay, and two were shot on the fish-ponds.

21st.—A Spotted Crake, a Teal, and two Lapwings at the market.

22nd.—A Shelduck was sent to me from the market ; it was killed the day before at the fish-ponds at Marsa Scala.

23rd.—I went to Gozo, where the absence of birds was simply astonishing—in fact, besides a few Sparrows, the only bird I saw was a Robin ; but I heard the note of the Corn-Bunting.

25th.—Two Song-Thrushes, five Quails, one Dotterel, and two Plovers were the only birds brought into the market. The wind to-day blew moderately from the N.N.W., and we had a little rain. Some Harriers came over against the wind; we had also some Song-Thrushes. Mr. Gera reported to me that he had received a Cream-coloured Courser which was taken at the Marsa.

26th.—The wind the same both in force and direction; a shower every now and then. Some Dotterels, Plovers, and Song-Thrushes were observed. A Teal was killed at the fish-ponds at Marsa Scala, and two Jack Snipes at the Marsa.

27th.—A fresh north wind and a little rain. Spotted Crakes, Snipes, Golden Plovers, and Dotterels were observed in fairly good numbers, some being also taken.

29th.—A few Hoopoes arrived, and a few were also taken; we had also some Plovers, Ruffs, and an occasional Redshank.

#### MARCH.

1st.—A moderate south-westerly wind. Some Snipes and Song-Thrushes; also three Redshanks, of which one was taken. A Bittern was sent to me from the market; this had been shot the day before on Gozo.

3rd.—I found in the market a melanic form of the Common Bunting and two Quails, one of which had a fully-developed egg.

6th.—A Black Redstart was sent to me from the market. The wind to-day blew moderately from the S.W. Some Hoopoes and Song-Thrushes were seen, and a few taken; there appeared also an occasional Spotted Crake and a few Ruffs. The Wry-neck's note was often heard. In the afternoon a few Lapwings came over from the N.W., the wind at this time having changed to a light S.E.

12th.—A fresh wind blew from the south. I observed a Chaffinch, some Greenfinches, some Starlings, two Hoopoes, some Song-Thrushes, many Larks, Titlarks, and Green Sand-pipers. Towards sunset three Plovers came from a north-westerly direction.

14th.—An Egyptian Nightjar and a Whimbrel were sent to me from the market; the Nightjar was shot the day before at Binghisa by a sportsman from Zurrico. In the market I

observed some Song-Thrushes and Quails, and one Scops Owl. The wind to-day was a very light S.E. Some Song-Thrushes were seen, and some taken. In the valleys there were a few Scops Owls.

15th.—At market. Some Quails, Song-Thrushes, one Lesser Kestrel, four Scops Owls, one Snipe, one Jack Snipe, one Reeve, one Green Sandpiper, two Spotted Crakes, and one Pintail.

17th.—Amongst several other birds I found in the market were one Corn-Bunting, two Hoopoes, one Scops Owl, one Short-eared Owl, one Marsh and one Montagu's Harrier, one Green Sandpiper, three Reeves and one Ruff, one Teal, one Moorhen, one Snipe, and two Spotted Crakes.

18th.—At the market again. I noticed two Teal, one Short-eared Owl, one male Montagu's Harrier, and one Cream-coloured Courser. The wind to-day was very light W.N.W. Short-toed Larks were noticed coming in from a south-westerly direction.

21st.—At the market, amongst other birds, I noticed a Short-eared and a Scops Owl, a Dotterel, a Golden Plover, and six Short-toed Larks.

22nd.—I passed a day at Comino. On the islet I observed a few Short-toed Larks, some Sardinian and Subalpine Warblers, a Southern Herring-Gull, and two Mediterranean Shearwaters. On my way back to Valletta from Marfa, passing through St. Paul's Bay, I saw many Swallows and Martins flying along the road. To-day we had a good passage of several species of Wagtails and some Lesser Kestrels.

24th.—A light wind varying from S. to S.W. Some Pintails alighted on the fish-ponds in Marsascirocco; a pair of these were taken and brought into the market.

25th.—A light wind from the N.W. brought us a fairly good passage of various Wagtails and Short-toed Larks, which were observed to come in from the S.E. Some Stilts came over also from the same direction, of which some were also taken.

26th.—A moderate north-westerly wind; we had rain during almost the whole night. This brought to us a large number of Hoopoes, Wheatears, Rock-Thrushes, Herons, Wrynecks, Sandpipers, Harriers, Kestrels, Owls, Crakes, etc.

27th.—The birds noted at the market to-day were the following: 126 Hoopoes, 32 Wheatears, 79 Wrynecks, 288



Rock-Thrushes, 6 Larks, 3 Redshanks, 3 Marsh-Harriers, 5 Montagu's Harriers, 4 Moorhens, 4 Spotted Crakes, 1 Short-eared Owl, 8 Scops Owls, 1 Bittern, 1 Purple Heron, 17 Spanish Sparrows, 75 Quails, 12 Song-Thrushes, 2 Ringed Plovers, 2 Stone-Curlews, 2 Kestrels, and 1 Lesser Kestrel.

28th.—A light southerly wind. Turtle Doves were noted for the first time in the season; we had also a good passage of Scops Owls, Hoopoes, and Rock-Thrushes. A Whimbrel was killed at Melliha.

30th.—A light wind from the S.E. brought over a fairly good number of Goldfinches, some of which were taken in the clap-nets by the bird-catchers of Binghisa and Zurricco.

#### APRIL.

1st.—At the Valletta Market I found one Short-eared and five Scops Owls, two Cream-coloured Coursers, and an Egyptian Nightjar; I could not find out where this last was taken. I know, however, that it had been taken the day before.

2nd.—Four clutches (three eggs each) of the Southern Herring-Gull were brought over to the market; these I bought, and found that only one was slightly incubated, the remaining three being perfectly fresh.

3rd.—The birds brought into the market this day were the following: 202 Quails, 1 Ringed Plover, 1 Wryneck, 2 Green Sandpipers, 2 Ruffs, 1 Pipit, 1 Dotterel, 1 Harrier, 7 Hoopoes, 1 Sparrow, 11 Scops Owls, and 1 Nightjar.

4th.—A very light wind, varying from E. to S.; we had a very plentiful passage of several species of Harriers and Hawks, amongst which great havoc was made by sportsmen.

5th.—A moderate E.S.E. wind; we had a good passage of Purple and Night Herons. The carob-trees were said to be full of Scops Owls to-day, and the so-called sportsman is said to have enjoyed himself much with the birds.

6th.—A strong wind from the E.S.E.; we had more than 1 inch of rain. This brought over to us a great number of Night and Purple Herons, many Hoopoes, Scops Owls, Harriers, Nightjars, Wrynecks, and Cuckoos; also a few Turtle-Doves, Wheatears, and Rollers.

7th.—I noted the following birds in the Valletta Market:

1 Black-winged Stilt, 1 Moorhen, 3 Kestrels, 23 Scops Owls, 53 Quails, 27 Hoopoes, 17 Nightjars, 15 Wrynecks, 9 Cuckoos, 7 Marsh and 5 Montagu's Harriers, 5 Turtle-Doves, 7 Wheatears, 1 Roller, 11 Night and 62 Purple Herons; the majority of these last found their way to the tables of the French men-of-war in the harbour.

8th.—A light westerly wind; we had a most abundant passage of Scops Owls, amongst which the so-called sportsmen wrought the greatest havoc. Great Plovers, Hoopoes, Purple and Night Herons, Sandpipers, and several other waders arrived also in fairly good numbers. A pair of Glossy Ibises was shot from the neighbourhood of Marsa Scala.

Amongst the other birds in the Valletta Market I counted 227 Scops Owls. With the dealers on St. John's Square I observed eleven live Moorhens, which were brought over from Gozo. A Golden Oriole was taken in the limits of Wardia, this being the first specimen which, as far as I am aware, was taken in the season. Other birds noticed to-day were a few Turtle-Doves, Wrynecks, and Spotted Crakes, seven Lesser Kestrels, two of which were taken, and a pretty good number of Scops Owls.

9th.—A moderate wind, varying from N.N.W. to W.N.W.; a plentiful supply of Swallows and Martins, many Scops Owls, Nightjars, and Hoopoes; also Wrynecks, Rock-Thrushes, Pipits, and a few waders.

10th.—Almost calm. Many Blue-headed Wagtails came over from the N.W.; of these many were taken in the clap-nets. Short-toed Larks and Hoopoes were seen in fairly good numbers, and a few Little Bitterns were taken.

11th.—Coming over from Marfa, together with Capt. Hopkins and Lieut. Jessop of the West Yorkshire Regiment, I saw two Rooks passing over in a northerly direction. I saw also a Woodchat, very many Wheatears, some Hawks and Harriers, and a few Linnets; these last seemed to have nests.

12th.—A Black-bellied Sand-Grouse was sent to me from the market; it was brought over from Nadur (Gozo), where it was killed the day before. The wind to-day was a moderate north-west. Great Plovers, Turtle-Doves, Scops Owls, and Wagtails were seen, and taken in fairly good numbers; other birds

noticed were Tawny Pipits, Whinchats, Cuckoos, Hoopoes, Nightjars, and Rock-Thrushes; also two Rollers and a Redshank.

14th.—I found a Golden Oriole and a Spotted Flycatcher in the market.

15th.—I noticed the following birds in the market: 2 Marsh and 2 Hen-Harriers, 3 Kestrels, 1 Orange-legged Hobby, 75 Scops Owls, 11 Turtle-Doves, 2 Rollers, 1 Cuckoo, 1 Snipe, 39 Quails, 4 Whinchats, 1 Ruff, and 1 Green-headed Wagtail.

16th.—A strong north-westerly wind brought over many Swifts, Swallows, Wagtails, and Nightingales; also some Bee-eaters, Rollers, Hoopoes, Nightjars, Scops Owls, and Turtle-Doves.

17th.—I found a Golden Plover in full plumage on one of the stalls at the market, this being the first instance of my finding this species in that dress.

19th.—Almost calm. Some Squacco Herons were noticed during the day passing over in a north-westerly direction; a few of these were taken.

20th.—A very fine day, almost calm. We had a very plentiful passage of all sorts of Warblers. Kestrels and Bee-eaters passed also in fairly good numbers; of these last very few were taken, the majority having passed very high, and apparently without alighting.

21st.—A strong wind from the S.S.E. brought over many Turtle-Doves, Orioles, Cuckoos, Bee-eaters, Nightjars, and Scops Owls; a few Hoopoes and Kestrels, and some Short-toed Larks were also noticed, and a Teal was shot at the Ghadira of Melliha.

22nd.—Amongst the other game I picked up in the market 3 Quails which were just fledged.

23rd.—At the market I noticed the following birds: 17 Turtle-Doves, 15 Quails, 1 White-eyed Duck, 2 Little Bitterns, and 2 Pratincoles; these last were shot at the Marsa out of a flock of five. Some Bee-eaters, a few Hoopoes, Rollers, and Nightjars, and several sorts of Hawks were noticed.

25th.—Birds at the market: 141 Quails, 73 Turtle-Doves, 6 Short-toed Larks, 3 Golden Orioles, 2 Bee-eaters, 2 Rollers, 5 Nightjars, and 1 Short-eared Owl.

26th.—Amongst other birds I observed in the market fourteen Golden Orioles, the majority being immature birds.

27th.—Many Orioles again at the market.

28th.—Birds noticed in the market: 67 Turtle-Doves, 39 Quails, 1 Roller, 18 Orioles, 4 Ruffs, 3 Green Sandpipers, 4 Little Stints, 1 Pratincole, and an Orange-legged Hobby. The wind to-day was a light W. or N.W. and quite an inrush of Quails was noticed, especially at Nadur Gozo.

29th.—Game at the market: 1375 Quails, 67 Turtle-Doves, 8 Orioles, 2 Hoopoes, 5 Cuckoos, 3 Great Plovers, 2 Ruffs, 2 Green Sandpipers, and 1 Little Stint. To-day's wind was a moderate S.S.W. Many Orioles came over, and several were taken. I was told that the carob-trees in our valleys harboured a good number of Nightjars, with which sportsmen had a good time.

30th.—A very light wind, varying from E. to S.E. A pretty good passage of Turtle-Doves, Quails, and Nightjars; also some Orioles, Bee-eaters, Rollers, Hoopoes, Stone-Curlews, and Cream-coloured Coursers; of these last three specimens were taken.

#### MAY.

1st.—A fresh easterly wind. Turtle-Doves and Quails again in fairly good numbers; also an exceptionally abundant arrival of Nightjars.

2nd.—A very light wind from the E.S.E. during the morning; this turned to the W. in the afternoon, when several Turtle-Doves, Rock-Thrushes, and Lesser Kestrels were seen arriving.

3rd.—A light wind, varying from W.; a fairly good passage of Quails, some Turtle-Doves, a few Nightjars, Cuckoos, and an occasional Little Bittern.

6th.—Captain Scott Hopkins reported to me that he had seen three Rooks in the vicinity of Hagiar Kim.

10th.—A moderate wind from the W. Some Storks were observed coming over from the north; two were taken in the vicinity of Birzebbugia, one being shot by Michele ci Bonnici (Tal Kerkni) and the other by Lorenzo Zammit (Ciaprott); Mr. G. Agius shot another at Marsascirocco. These three specimens were mounted by Mr. Conti. At the same time that these three Storks were shot from this end of the island, three others were taken at l'Ahrax (Melliha) at the other end; of these, one,



I was told, was obtained by Mr. L. Naudi of Robato, and one was kindly secured for me by my friend Prof. E. C. Vassallo, LL.D.; the other, I am afraid, was consigned to the pot.

12th.—A light wind blew from the N.W. I went to the Salina, where I saw a White-winged Black Tern, many Green and Curlew Sandpipers, several Ruffs, and some Little Stints.

16th.—A light or very light N.W. westerly wind; some Turtle-Doves and Orioles came over, and a flock of Purple Herons passed from the S.E.

18th.—A light north-westerly wind; we had a pretty abundant passage of Turtle-Doves, some Orioles, one or two Hoopoes, and several Hawks.

19th.—A light wind from the north and N.W.; Turtle-Doves again, and a few Orioles and Rollers.

22nd.—A very light easterly wind; Snipes, Ruffs, and some Curlew-Sandpipers; also a few Turtle-Doves, and an occasional Oriole.

26th.—I went to St. Paul's Islands, where I observed several Short-toed Larks, many of which were breeding. In that neighbourhood, at a place known as Ghar il Bies, I was glad to find two or three pairs of Jackdaws which had nests with young. On my way back to Valletta I observed a good number of Swallows and Martins; the wind at this time was blowing gently from the S.W.

28th.—Buzzards were again observed coming over from the same direction; Col. Francia sent me a young male shot by him at Pembroke on the same day.

30th.—A fresh easterly wind; some Ruffs were taken, one of which was in very fine plumage, but without the ruff.

#### JUNE.

1st.—A few Ruffs at the market, and these were apparently the last to come.

19th.—About two-and-a-half dozen Linnets just fledged were brought over from Gozo to the bird-dealers at St. John's Square.

24th.—I observed a flock of Little Stints flying along the coast at Ghar id-dud.

26th.—Short-toed Larks still nesting, and nests with eggs were observed at Pembroke by Col. Francia.

27th.—Two young Kestrels were observed by Mr. Jos. Zammit flying about the barren rocks in the vicinity of Krendi.

As can be seen the scarcity of birds during this month has been rather exceptional, as even the common Sparrows of Malta seemed to have disappeared. This was, perhaps, due to the excessively high temperature for a rather large part of the month.

## MIGRATION NOTES FROM A PASSENGER STEAMER.

BY HUGH WHISTLER.

On April 25th this year I sailed for England from Karachi in one of the passenger steamers belonging to the City Line, and during the voyage kept notes of all birds seen; as many of these were land-birds on migration, it may be of interest to place on record the ornithological diary of the voyage.

*April 25th.*—Embarked at Karachi, and started during the afternoon; in the harbour were many Brown-headed Gulls (*Larus brunneicephalus*) and a few Black-backed Gulls (*Larus affinis*); a single individual of the Sooty Gull (*L. hemprichii*) was also noted; a few other birds seen were perhaps Terns.

*April 26th.*—Land visible in the distance during the greater part of the day. A single Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) appeared and accompanied the ship for some time. A few Tropic birds were probably *Phaëthon flavirostris*; a species of Tern were noted, with black cap and bill and upper parts; this I presume to have been the Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuliginosa*).<sup>\*</sup> A female Rose-ringed Parroquet (*Palæornis torquatus*) flew about round the ship for a time, but this perhaps had escaped from one of the many cages in which Lascars were taking Parroquets to England for sale.

*April 27th.*—Entered Bombay Harbour about 2 p.m.; no birds were seen until we entered the harbour, where *Larus brunneicephalus* was found to be numerous; a few had already assumed the chocolate mask.

<sup>\*</sup> No doubt; it was a very familiar species on the voyage to and from India in our own experience. [ED.]

With the Gulls were a few Terns, which I was unable to identify; they were about the size of the Indian River Tern (*Sterna seena*), with short-forked tails, and of a nondescript grey colour, with no particular markings, save a black mark near the eye; the bill was black. It is possible that they were Gull-billed Terns (*Sterna anglica*) in non-breeding dress.

*April 28th.*—Arabian Sea. The only bird seen all day was a small passerine, which followed the course of the ship for about half an hour against the wind; by flight, appearance, and note it seemed to be some species of Wagtail, yellowish in colour, with white in the tail, and perhaps a chestnut head.

*April 29th.*—Arabian Sea; no birds seen.

*April 30th.*—Arabian Sea. A few Black and White Gannets, namely, a party of three and a single bird, were doubtless the Masked Booby (*Sula cyanops*).

A good many Shearwaters (*Puffinus* sp.?) were observed during the day.

*May 1st.*—Arabian Sea; a party of three of the Gannets seen, as well as one or two solitary individuals. Shearwaters were plentiful.

*May 2nd.*—Arabian Sea. Position at noon: Lat.  $14^{\circ}00'$ , long.  $57^{\circ}03'$ ; 358 miles to Aden.

About 10 a.m. a Nightjar (*Caprimulgus* sp.?) came aboard, and flew about for some ten minutes, perching occasionally; after this it disappeared, but must have hidden somewhere in the ship, as it was flying about both in the morning and evening of May 3rd. I did not see it on the 4th, but it was still with us before breakfast on May 5th—a good example of an “assisted passage.”

Shortly before dusk a party of nine Bee-eaters, which looked like *Merops philippinus*, passed flying eastwards low over the sea with the typical hesitating flight of the species.

Fewer Shearwaters were noted than yesterday, and one or two Gannets, in addition to a party of four, which were resting on the sea.

*May 3rd.*—Arabian Sea. A male Rose-ringed Parroquet (*Palæornis torquatus*) was flying round the ship and settling on the rigging; it was doubtless one of the Lascars' birds.



Only two or three of the Shearwaters seen, and perhaps a Gannet or two.

May 4th.—Position at noon : Lat.  $12^{\circ}53'$  N., long.  $43^{\circ}15'$  E.

We halted at Perim from 6 to 10.30 a.m. in order to coal. The Sooty Gulls (*Larus hemprichii*) were common in the harbour ; with them were a few Black-backed Gulls (*Larus affinis*). The only other birds noticed were two distant flocks that appeared to be composed of Pigeons.

Sooty Gulls were very numerous for the rest of the day in the Red Sea.

May 5th.—Position at noon : Lat.  $16^{\circ}53'$  N., long.  $40^{\circ}42'$  N. ; land visible all day.

Sooty Gulls followed the ship during the morning ; a good many sea-birds seen in the distance during the day were probably Gulls, but one of a dark colour was apparently a Gannet or Cormorant.

About 6 p.m. a Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) arrived on the ship, and, after flying about for some time, settled on an awning. Another bird had come aboard in the morning, but I did not see it ; the description sounded like that of some species of Kingfisher.

May 6th.—Red Sea. No sea-birds noted.

About 8 a.m. a Dove, apparently *Turtur risorius*, arrived from the south, and passed low over the ship. Later another Dove arrived, which was clearly the Common Turtle-Dove (*Turtur communis*). Then I observed two large Doves and a smaller one flying near the ship, but could not make out whether they included those seen previously or not.

About 10 a.m. a Quail (*Coturnix communis*) approached the ship, flying low over the waves, and then went away again in the direction of the African coast.

May 7th.—Red Sea. No sea-birds noted.

Only three birds were seen ; these were a Turtle-Dove (*Turtur communis*), a Swift, which looked like *Cypselus apus*, and headed south, and a small unidentified brown bird, which was flying parallel with the ship for some time.

May 8th.—Red Sea. Position at noon : Lat.  $20^{\circ}34'$  N., long.  $32^{\circ}51'$  E.

A Swift or Swallow seen flying southwards, and a yellowish

Wagtail (which might have been *Motacilla boarula*) was observed flying in the same course as the ship was steaming. A few sea-birds noted in the distance.

About 10 a.m. a stream of large raptorial birds, about a hundred in number, were observed flying over from the African to the Arabian shore; they flew at no great height above the sea, roughly one to two gunshots, and followed the same line in the straggling formation of a flock of Rooks; about 11 a.m. a smaller flight of some twenty individuals were noted, and another dozen odd birds about a quarter of an hour later. These birds were all apparently of one species, and from their flight, general appearance, and wing-markings I took them to be Honey-Buzzards; the lower parts of some individuals that passed over the ship were transversely barred.

About 6 p.m. we entered Suez Harbour; here the White-eyed Gull (*Larus leucophthalmus*) was abundant, a handsome species, with sooty mantle and wings, the latter edged with white, black head, white eyelid and neck, and a bright reddish or orange bill. There were also many Black-backed Gulls (*Larus fuscus* or *L. affinis*) and one or two Skuas, of which I was unable to identify the species.

May 9th.—Left Suez about 10 a.m. In the Suez Canal my attention was directed chiefly to matters military and not ornithological; however I observed a flight of Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) between Suez and Ismailia, and several others in the canal proper. No Gulls were seen until we reached the Bitter Lakes, where *Larus leucophthalmus* was common; further on in the canal again a single Black-backed Gull was seen. Other birds seen were a Teal, a Raven, some Coots, and a pair of Spur-winged Plovers (*Hoplopterus spinosus*), which were running and calling on the bank of the canal.

May 10th.—Spent the day in Port Said Harbour; the only species of Gull frequenting the harbour was a Lesser Black-backed Gull, but I was unable to distinguish whether it was *Larus fuscus* or *Larus affinis*.

May 11th.—Sailed from Port Said at noon, and saw no birds after that save three parties of large Gulls, respectively of nine, three, and six individuals, who were also following the same line of flight in the Mediterranean. No details of our course or of

of the lands viewed were allowed us, so I am unable to say whereabouts the birds noted below were met with.

*May 12th.*—Mediterranean Sea. The only birds about were a few brown-and-white Shearwaters (*Puffinus* sp. ?), and a small Hawk, possibly a Kestrel, which passed over, going towards the African coast.

*May 13th.*—Mediterranean Sea. Crete viewed in the morning. A Dove was seen in the morning; another arrived from an easterly direction about 5 p.m., and one, perhaps the same, was still about at dusk. All were apparently Turtle-Doves (*Turtur communis*). A Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) was flying about the ship for an hour or two before noon.

About 5.30 p.m. a flight of five or six House-Martins (*Chelidon urbica*), accompanied by a single Sand-Martin (*Cotile riparia*) arrived, and the House-Martins kept on settling on the ship and following it until dusk.

Two or three Shearwaters were seen, and there were a few Herring-Gulls about all day: one came near enough for me to distinguish the yellow legs of the Yellow-legged Herring-Gull (*Larus cachinnans*).

*May 14th.*—Mediterranean Sea; no land visible all day.

This was a great day for migration. Many Turtle-Doves (*Turtur communis*) were observed at different times, on one occasion seven or eight arriving together.

A very large flight of House-Martins (*Chelidon urbica*), accompanied by a few Sand-Martins (*Cotile riparia*) and Swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) arrived about 4 p.m. Some of these were very exhausted, and were caught by the hand as they settled on the upper works and decks, and I fancy that several must have died. The stomachs of a House-Martin and Sand-Martin that I examined were empty. A few House-Martins were also observed throughout the day, and a flight of about thirty were following the ship in the evening and settling in rows on the ropes that secured one of the after boats.

A male Red-footed Falcon (*Falco vespertinus*) arrived in the afternoon, and, failing to catch any of the House-Martins at which he struck, took up his station on the davits of a boat. A Lascar climbed up the davit, and with a quick grab caught in his hand the little Falcon, which was sitting all unsuspecting.

This bird came into my possession, and I skinned it. The plumage was very worn, and there was very little fat on the body; in the stomach were slight traces of insect remains. Another Hawk was seen at dusk striking at the Martins that followed the ship. It appeared to be a Kestrel (*Tinnunculus alaudarius*).

During the afternoon two or three Spotted Flycatchers (*Muscicapa grisola*) were catching flies about the deck with but little fear of the passengers.

A Quail (*Coturnix communis*) was seen flying on the same course as the ship in the morning, and a bird that I caught one glimpse of in the evening was a apparently a Common Sand-piper (*Totanus hypoleucus*).

Four Shearwaters were observed in all.

May 15th.—Mediterranean Sea. Some land viewed was reputed to be Cape Bonne. Before breakfast a Quail (*Coturnix communis*) came aboard, and took cover under a donkey-engine. An unsuccessful attempt at capture was made, and the Quail flew out to sea again.

The only other migrant observed was an extremely ragged-winged Turtle-Dove which settled on the ship in the evening.

A few Gulls that were following the ship were Herring-Gulls, but I did not identify the species.

A very large flock of Shearwaters were passed in the evening; some of these birds settled on the water, the first time I have seen any of the genus at rest.

May 16th.—Mediterranean Sea; land visible most of the day.

Many Herring-Gulls followed the ship, some of which were clearly *Larus cachinnans*.

May 17th.—Reached Marseilles early, and continued my journey by the overland route.



## NOTES AND QUERIES.

## AVES.

**Notes from Sussex.**—Owing to an abundance of hornbeam-seed, I had expected a fairly good arrival of Hawfinches, and they began to appear during the latter part of November, increasing the following month, the largest number seen by me at one time being twenty-one, on December 17th. As usual, a few passed the nesting season in the district, and some young were successfully reared. A shortage in alder-seed was responsible for the small number of Lesser Redpolls which spent the winter here, but the spring arrival of nesting birds was about the same, possibly rather more; indeed, I have never known a spring during which single Redpolls so often came under my notice, though it is doubtful if more nested than usual. A little party of Siskins (*Carduelis spinus*) paid me a visit on January 18th, and some of them continued to come into the garden throughout February and the first fortnight in March, but I was certainly astonished at seeing two there on May 6th—a Siskin has never before been seen by me in May. Rather fewer Redwings spent the winter here than is generally the case, and I did not see a Fieldfare until February 24th, when we were having snow. This is not a Fieldfare district, but during a spell of heavy snow these birds will suddenly appear and invade the woods and shrubberies in large numbers. A small flight, south-westerly, of Fieldfares, together with Mistle-Thrushes and Lapwings, occurred on February 26th, 27th, and 28th, and a few Black-headed Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*) appeared. However, such Fieldfares as passed through the district on migration two months later were in no great hurry to leave us, and some were here as late as May 2nd. I saw very little of the Brambling at any time during the winter. On March 25th there was a beautiful Great Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*) in Buxted Park, only the second authentically seen by me during a period of some sixteen years' residence. One was seen by me in Maresfield Park, January 5th, 1912. Of our summer migrants the Nightingale cannot be said to have been other than poorly represented; I do not think more than six or seven were located by me, but there has been a slight increase in the numbers of the Wood-Warbler (*Phylloscopus sibilatrix*), the House-Martin (*Chelidon urbica*), and the Turtle Dove (*Turtur communis*), whilst most of the others have been here at about the average, and the Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) has been better

represented than usual, though this is not a Shrike district. As regards the Willow-Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), I would call attention to an alteration in its nesting-habits, as the same may have been observed in other localities. Owing to a series of very wet winters and early springs, this little Warbler has arrived to find its former nesting-sites exceedingly damp, and, in some instances, under water, and as a consequence woodlands which should have been filled with it and ringing with its lively notes, have during the past few years become almost deserted. One might easily suppose that a decided falling-off in number had occurred; indeed, I do not deny that fewer may have been arriving here during the past five or six years, but, as a matter of fact, there have been of late many more what may be described as outlying pairs of Willow-Warblers than formerly. It would be interesting to know if this has been noticed by observers in other localities. To form some judgment as to the number of birds affecting a well-wooded and strictly enclosed district one must rely, to a certain extent, upon the amount of song he hears, and they did not give us very much this year—in fact, the cold, damp, and gloom which so often prevailed some time after the arrival of our summer birds undoubtedly had a depressing effect upon them, and very little was to be heard of them. Chiffchaffs already had a partly-built nest in my garden before I had heard one note uttered; in fact, I did not know a Chiffchaff was on the premises, and the cock must have mated without a song and did exceedingly little singing afterwards. The Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla melanope*) again arrived for nesting, and three spots affected by pairs were known to me. On May 27th I watched a female completing the lining of a nest, but unfortunately this nest was in full view of anyone crossing the bridge near which it was built, and was stolen. Otherwise it was, to me, especially interesting as being the first nest of the Grey Wagtail I had ever seen. Great Spotted Woodpeckers (*Dendrocopus major*) nested in the same tree used by them in 1912, a small decayed oak standing among Scotch pines, the hole being at about twice the height of that bored by them four years ago, when it was rather less than eight feet above the ground. The few nests of the Great Spotted Woodpecker seen by me here have been in oak, cherry, and Scotch pine. The arrival of our breeding Greenfinches was quite up to the average, but Linnets showed a falling-off. I think rather more Herons pay visits to the neighbourhood than was the case some years since, and in "British Birds," vol. i., p. 360, there is a notice of an article which appeared in the "Hastings and

East Sussex Naturalist" in which it was stated that a new colony of Herons "was formed last year at Plashett Park, near Lewes." I do not know if the birds continued there, but if they have done so, that may account for their more frequent visits to this neighbourhood, as "The Plashett" is not much more than two miles outside the parish of Uckfield. However groundless my ideas may have been, I have never been a great believer in birds, after an absence of some generations, returning to their ancestral breeding haunts, but some forty years ago I often took walks with my father in the vicinity of Plashett Park, and well remember him more than once remarking; "There used to be a Heronry here at one time, but the keepers destroyed it, because they said the birds took the fish." I do not think he ever saw it, nor can I remember that he mentioned any date in connection with it, but he must have known of its existence. My father was a native of Lewes, where he was born in 1828. Regarding the birds in my garden, Thrushes were building in January; Blackbirds reared three broods in the same nest, which I have never known them do before; and Wrens abandoned a nest in a small rustic summer-house after using it six years in succession. This nest had become very dilapidated. After causing me much anxiety and disappointment, my Wrynecks left me this year—their most successful year was 1912, when a brood of nine was brought off. —ROBERT MORRIS (Uckfield, Sussex).

**Abnormalities in Mandarin and Muscovy Ducks.**—In confinement, at any rate, the male of *Aex galericulata* seems rather inclined towards colour-variation, although the specimens coming to hand of late years have been mostly wild-caught; while its ally, the Carolina (*Aex sponsa*) is still, after many years of breeding in captivity, as true to colour as a wild bird. The most remarkable colour-aberration in the Mandarin I have ever seen was in a specimen Mr. J. D. Hamlyn had on sale with many others about 1910 or 1911; my notes do not give date. This bird, a small specimen—smaller, in fact, than a normal female—presented three remarkable abnormalities; (1) there was no copper area in the crest, this being all dark-green and white; (2) the inner expanded webs of the innermost secondaries, which form the fans, were black, with a slight gloss of green towards the edges; there was no trace of the white edge, nor of the "snip" of rufous on the inner web, the whole fan being dark; (3) the face showed none of the buff shading usual round the eye and over the lores, but was completely white up to the green of the forehead, down to the jaw, and back to the origin of the hackled frill.

Thus this bird really looked like a new species of *Aex*; the white face was not ordinary albinism, for as the bird went into undress it became mottled with the appropriate colour (grey) for that phase.

Another drake, also, in a large lot deposited by Mr. Evans, of Chicago, in the Zoo in 1912, had the same white face, but with normal fans; Edwards' figure, apparently the first one of the species, also shows such a bird. Although the white face looks at first sickly and unpleasing, it is, so to speak, more consistent with the rest of the Mandarin's violently-contrasted colour-scheme than the normal buff shadings, and so may be called a progressive variation. But as last year a bird at Kew, with the left eye missing, had this well-defined white on that side only and yet moulted into normal undress on both sides and assumed normal buff there after that, we are faced with one of the many cases where progress seems pathological.

This summer I came across a male specimen of the ordinary domestic race of the Muscovy Duck (*Cairina moschata*) showing an altogether abnormal development of the bare red skin of the face. This extended all over the head except on the crown and throat, invading the forehead and chin to the level of the eyes, leaving the ear-orifices exposed, and running down the sides of the neck to the level of the end of the nuchal portion of the crest—to the point, in fact, where the green on a Mallard's neck ends. The skin was seamed on the neck, but not carunculated on the face, though there was the usual Swan-like caruncle at the base of the bill. (I have never seen the carunculated face in English-bred Muscovy Ducks, only in African, Indian, and American specimens, and it is not universal in these.) The bird was healthy and not moulting; it was a large, heavy specimen, and, from its stiff gait, I should say very old. It had no abdominal flap or "keel" such as one often sees in this and other domestic Ducks and Geese, and its colour was that of the wild race—black with white wing-coverts—but with a large admixture of white on the neck and breast, a flesh-coloured bill, and light yellowish feet. It was inactive even for its sluggish species, and I never saw it erect its crest when challenging another bird.—F. FINN.

**Note on the Nesting of the Wren.**—Some time ago this season I visited a friend, and noticing some birds' nests in his home I made the remark, "This appears to be a cock Wren's nest, and a fine one too," and enquired where he had met with it. He told me it was a cock's nest, as I surmised, but, it being such a fine nest, he took it home in July, and to his surprise he found it to contain eggs—five.



I believe—not one of which was broken, although he had very carelessly put the nest into one of his pockets. I think it is not a common occurrence for such nests to be utilised for breeding purposes. Sometimes they are used as temporary sleeping-quarters for newly-fledged young, after they have left the nests in which they have been reared. The Wren has again this year brought off its young in my poultry-run. It has utilised the same crevice in the old bridge over which runs the foot-path from our Council school to an outlying hamlet. The nesting-site is very similar to the one chosen by the Great Tit on the opposite side of the bridge; no part of the Wren's nest could be seen from the outside.—E. P. BUTTERFIELD (Wilsden).

**Distribution of the Linnet in Britain.**—In the 'Zoologist' for 1911, p. 70, Mr. Stubbs, referring to the breeding of the Linnet, states that this species is rare in or absent from a tract of country—apparently suitable too—from Hebden Bridge to, say, Glossop and parts of North Derbyshire. It may be of interest to state that in walking to Castle Carr *via* the way of Ogden Moor belonging to the Halifax Corporation, in July, I saw in a clough at the latter place a pair of Linnets which were evidently breeding; but my time being limited I did not search for the nest, or probably young—I have found this species with young at the end of August. In walking from Chatsworth Park to Chesterfield I found the Linnet breeding not at all uncommonly, and in and about the Peak district I think I have noted this, but I will not be positive. It is, however, fairly common in the Huddersfield district. In all parts of Yorkshire I have visited wherever there are whin-covers I have never noted an absence of this species in the breeding season. During the past summer I found five nests in the districts, one or two in curious situations. One, the first I found, was built close to a foot-path in some dead fronds of the bracken of last year's growth which had pushed their way into the lower branches of a hawthorn and had remained standing through the winter. Within about a hundred yards another was built in a lateral branch of a pine-tree, whilst another was built in a spruce about seven feet high. All these were built within a radius of about two hundred yards. One which I found on Baildon Moor was built in a small whin, but the nest was quite on the ground. This bird, however, for some reason forsook its nest. I was very pleased to read Mr. Stubbs' notes, to which I have referred, since it is always interesting to read of any bird which is said to be common and generally distributed, but which in certain areas—and apparently suitable ones too—is absent or very rare. Some years ago

I spent a month in North Yorkshire in a deep valley, and I was surprised to find that both the Common Sparrow and Skylark were very scarce. Indeed I have always found that the Skylark does not affect deep valleys in any numbers during the breeding season.

—E. P. BUTTERFIELD (Wilsden, Yorks).

**Food of the Ring-Dove.**—Last summer my attention was called by many people to some birds which visited a field near our recreation ground, and continued their visits day after day for some time. On my going to the field in question I found them to be Ring-Doves. Taking my field-glasses I could plainly see they were feeding upon the seeds of a certain grass, and on going to the particular place, I found it was one of the soft grasses (*Holcus*); and on returning home, I saw a Lesser Redpoll feeding upon the seeds of the same grass growing in the recreation field.—E. P. BUTTERFIELD.

**Rooks and Railways.**—What more natural than that Rooks should be found frequenting and building their nests near railways? Rooks very soon learn to ignore trains, and find that they are less persecuted near railways, where there are few trespassers to disturb them. Besides this, there is always a certain amount of scraps of food thrown from railway trains, and lying about stations and signal-boxes. Rooks and other birds also frequent laden railway trucks, especially in sidings, from which they pick up a leakage of grain, seeds, and food-stuffs. I have specially noticed this in railway yards on Sundays, when no workmen are about. In hard weather Rooks frequently feed on the train-oil which is used to oil the wheels of the rolling-stock and often oozes from the oil-boxes. Under these circumstances it is not to be wondered at that Rooks are found sitting on telegraph wires, on the look-out for food, and nesting near railway lines. The habit of Rooks of often building their nests in the most frequented thoroughfares of some of our large towns is no doubt attributable to the fact that they find more security there from egg-collectors and others, and also to some of the same causes which I have mentioned as attracting them to railway lines. I think Mr. Finn will find that his interesting observations on Rooks on his journey from Tiverton to London will hold good on many, if not on most, railway lines in the kingdom where Rooks are generally to be found.—JOHN R. B. MASEFIELD (Rosehill, Cheadle, Staffordshire).

**Storks or Cranes at Gallipoli.**—In Mr. D. A. J. Buxton's paper on "Birds seen during the Gallipoli Campaign" it is stated ('Zool.', pp. 415–416) that large flocks of what were believed to be Cranes flew southward, uttering loud clanging notes. In a paper by Captain

Boyd these birds seemed to have been identified as Storks, and the matter is left undecided. As Storks have no note, and the loud clanging note is characteristic of the Cranes, there can be no doubt that the birds observed were Cranes. The "clapping" noise made by the Stork is produced by mechanical means only\*.—F. C. R. JOURDAIN.

**Longevity in a Magpie.**—A friend tells me has known a Magpie for twenty-four years, and it had been with its owners some time before that. "He" had been with them for sixteen years, always being referred to as "he" and named "Mac," when "he" scandalised his large circle of friends by laying an egg! This was the only occasion. He was very fond of beer, which evidently agreed with him. From what I can gather, Mac's seems to have been "a long life, and a gay one."—(Miss) A. PREYSS.

**An Unusual Blackbird's Nest.**—This spring, when visiting the Horniman Gardens, I found a Blackbird's nest in a very exposed position. The nest was in a small hollow of an oak-tree, about six and a half feet from the ground; this is rather high for this bird. The female as well as the male was orange-billed. There were five eggs of the usual colour. The birds deserted their nest before the eggs were hatched, evidently disturbed by the numerous visitors to the Gardens.—ERIC L. KELTING (London).

**Status of the Stonechat in North-West Yorkshire.**—Under the above heading my old friend Mr. E. P. Butterfield quotes me (*ante*, p. 398), as reporting a pair of Stonechats with one young one—the latter fairly strong on the wing—this summer. As Mr. Butterfield does not give any date, and as the locality stated is not strictly accurate, I am sure he will excuse my adding the following particulars, in order to avoid the possibility of any confusion arising in the future. The spot was actually at Threshfield, but close to Grassington Railway Station, in Upper-Wharfedale. Mr. D. Sutcliffe reported that he had seen a pair of Stonechats there on June 19th, and on July 8th I went, as directed, and saw the three birds at the exact spot in the same field. It was a very windy day, and there may have been other young hiding in the long herbage; but I could not see signs of any more. Personally, I have not the slightest doubt but that these birds had nested there; although, as

\* Most probably both species were present, as suggested by Mr. Buxton (p. 416); the identification of Cranes by their note does not exclude the presence of Storks as well, which would be very difficult to distinguish from them when flying at a height or in the dusk. [Ed.]

Mr. Butterfield suggests in his note, it would have been more satisfactory to have actually found the nest. As I did not hear of them until three or four days before I went, this would have been an almost impossible feat in my case. But my experience of Stonechats in districts where they nest fairly commonly is that this is one of those species where both old and young birds keep fairly close to the nesting-site for some considerable time after the young have left the nest. However, these are the first, and only, Stonechats that I have been able to see in the West Riding in the nesting season, and during the last thirty years I have tramped very many hundreds of miles in order to find them, or to endeavour to verify reports. As recorder for vertebrate zoology to the Bradford Natural History and Microscopical Society for nearly a quarter of a century, I have been wishful to add the Stonechat to our list of known breeding species. Unfortunately the local name here of the Wheatear is "Stonechat," and in many cases that has helped to confuse matters. *Saxicola rubicola* is a bird of passage with us—at times remaining a few days, or even a few weeks, in one place—in October or November, and again in February or March. Mr. W. Greaves, however, informs me that a pair of Stonechats, the first Stonechats recorded for that district, remained in the neighbourhood of Hebden Bridge last winter from October to February; certainly an unusual occurrence for North-West Yorkshire. Very curiously, when I sent Mr. W. H. Parkin word that there were Stonechats near Grassington Station, which had apparently nested there, he replied that he had seen a female Stonechat with "feed" in her beak on July 9th at Menston, in the same dale, and within four miles of my house. Neither Mr. Parkin nor I were, however, able to find any further trace of this lady or her relatives.—HARRY B. BOOTH (Ben Rhydding).

**Yellowhammers' Nest in Rick.**—With reference to Mr. Cocks's note on the nesting of the Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) in a rick (*ante*, p. 352) I have found in former years at least two nests in this district built in field hayricks. One of the nests contained the feathers of a young Cuckoo, probably killed by a Rat. Ricks are often chosen for nesting sites, and it is not unusual to find two or three species nesting in the same rick.

Besides the Yellowhammer I have found the following birds breeding in ricks: Blackbird, Thrush, House-Sparrow, Robin, Wren (most frequently), Pied Wagtail, and Spotted Flycatcher; and no doubt other birds have been recorded.—S. G. CUMMINGS (9, King Street, Chester.)



**Yellow Wagtail in Bedfordshire in November.**—On November 11th, whilst my son and I were walking around the Sewage Farm at Newnham, we observed a Yellow Wagtail; it was either an adult female or a bird of the year. I have never previously known this species occur in this county later than the end of September; numbers remain as a rule until the second or third week of that month, but soon after all have passed southwards. I have notes, September 19th, 1909, of numbers being seen at Blunham; September 29th, 1907, of solitary birds seen at Copley and Great Barford; on the same date, in 1912, one at Newnham; and on September 23rd, 1911, one at Shefford. When such belated migrants as the above instance are observed, there is always the doubt that some injury has been the means of preventing their leaving this country. I spent some time in watching this particular Wagtail, and I came to the conclusion that, although apparently fully active when on the ground, it was reluctant to take wing, and it allowed us to approach to close quarters.—J. STEELE ELLIOTT.

#### PISCES.

**Meaning of "Skull Slyce."**—Many kinds of fish are enumerated in the Household Accounts of the ancient family of Lestrange of Hunstanton (Norfolk), which fortunately are preserved from 1519 to 1578. Among the kinds mentioned is one called the "Skull Slyce," which at present has not been identified; Mr. Hamon le Strange, the present owner of these singular manuscripts, also finds the word to be spelt *Sculleslyes*, and *Skulk Slyce* in one passage. The prefix "Skull" or "Scull" probably denotes the Plaice; *Skolla* and *Sandsküdda* are Swedish names for this species, and *Skulder* Danish, but the second word "Slyce" is a complete puzzle, and assistance in explaining it would be welcome.—J. H. GURNEY (Keswick Hall, Norwich).

#### GASTROPODA.

**Behaviour of Chiton Ruber.**—An example of this mollusc, closely attached to the shell of a living *Anomia ephippium*, obtained at Weymouth, was placed in an aquarium on October 1st, 1915. It was observed almost every morning that the Chiton had shifted during the night to a different part of the shell, though it was never seen to move in the daytime. During the night of its eighty-first day of residence in the aquarium it quitted the shell of the *Anomia* and settled upon that of a contiguous *Anomia*. On the 150th night it returned to the first shell, where it remained for only a few days,

subsequently migrating to a third *Anomia* shell, and finally to a stone. All the shells and the stone were in contact. The Chiton died during the 325th day, and it was found lying curled up on the sand at the base of the stone. It fed on the minute brownish vegetable growth which existed on the shells and stone, and this growth was systematically cleared from each of these objects before the Chiton quitted it. The Chiton, which was about 10 mm. long, was always in the daytime pressed closely against its foothold; and its colours (bright red and white) and markings, especially on the stone, were in harmony with those of its surroundings, so that it was often very difficult to find it.—H. N. MILLIGAN.

### INSECTA.

Wasps' Nest in a Gun.—It was not until July 20th, when a little swarm of Wasps flew around the muzzle of an old ship's gun, that I knew of my possession of Wasps. This gun, which most likely came from the Sussex port of Newhaven, and probably did duty aboard a "privateer" in the early years of the last century, stands on a small bit of lawn at the back of the house, and Great Tits and Coal Tits have already built in it; but not until this year has it been occupied by Wasps. It may be said that on a truly hot summer's day I have hesitated to rest a hand on it for any length of time, and when we had a short outburst of summer weather after the middle of July the Wasps found the heat too great for them by the early afternoon, and all the ordinary routine of the colony ceased—those that arrived either refused to enter, or, if they did, quickly came out again. To improve matters, they adopted a simple means of sending a draught of cool air up the bore of the gun, and that was done by some two or three dozen assembling just inside the muzzle and vigorously vibrating the wings; and this was kept up until the ancient piece of ordnance became shaded by a neighbouring shrub, when the Wasps again returned to their usual duties. I may have over-estimated the perspicuity of *Vespa*, but it seems doubtful to my mind if a queen Wasp would have endangered the existence of the colony she was about to establish by selecting such a site for the nest if there was going to be a full amount of sunshine; in any case, it must be admitted that sunshine has been sadly lacking during the past spring and summer. Nevertheless, having no desire to combat the opinions of those who assure us that the heavy gunfire in France and Flanders is responsible for the clouds and rain we have been having, and which I can hardly think a queen Wasp would

have taken into consideration, it would be as well to say that this nest is not in a flourishing condition, and when this was written seemed about to fail altogether.—ROBERT MORRIS (Uckfield, Sussex).

#### ASTEROIDEA.

**Growth and Regeneration in *Solaster papposus*.**—*Growth*: On May 19th, 1915, a Sun-Star (*Solaster papposus*), 40 mm. in diameter, was placed in an aquarium, in which it lived for 375 days, and when the animal died it had attained a diameter of 90 mm. The average rate of growth of the Sun-Star was therefore 1 mm. in every seven and a half days. The Sun-Star was fed on dead and living *Asterias rubens*, mussel, shrimp, and fish. *Regeneration*: The Sun-Star had been in the aquarium for seventy-nine days when a piece, 8 mm. in length, of one of its rays was removed in order that its regeneration might be observed. The injured ray quickly healed, developed a new terminal "eye-spot," and continued to add to its length. Its rate of growth, however, was only equivalent to that of the other rays, and consequently it was still about 8 mm. shorter than the others when the animal died.—H. N. MILLIGAN.

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**Correction.**—In the 'Zoologist' for November, 1916, p. 434, I mentioned the occurrence of a white Curlew. I did not see the bird, but later ascertained from Williams, Dublin, by whom it was set up, that it was a pure white Whimbrel, shot in May, 1915.—ROBERT F. RUTTLEDGE (Bloomfield, Hollymough, Co. Mayo).

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\*. The aim of the authors has been to give a biographical account of each author or co-author of a separately published work, followed by a complete bibliography of published works or contributions to works, and of papers contributed to Journals (where such exceed one page in extent), bearing on British Ornithology. Collations are given in all possible instances, together with verbatim spaced titles of separate works published before 1850, and shorter titles of those published since that date. Critical notes on many of the books are also included. To this it is intended to add by way of Supplement a Geographical Bibliography, in which the books and articles, as well as the ornithological matter in topographical books, will be arranged under their separate counties, thus affording an index to the work accomplished in the various districts.

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